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Review and implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly: regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

During the period under review, the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa convened its 20th and 21st ministerial meetings. Through its Bureau, the Committee continued to monitor political and security developments in the subregion. Owing to financial constraints, it was not able to organize the workshop on capacity-building for the Central African civil society and the seminar on women, peace, security and development in Central Africa, as provided for in its programme of work for the period 2003-2004.

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* A/59/150.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 58/65 of 8 December 2003, entitled "Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa", the General Assembly, inter alia, reaffirmed its support for efforts aimed at promoting confidence-building measures at the regional and subregional levels in order to ease tensions and conflicts in Central Africa and to further peace, stability and sustainable development in the subregion. It also reaffirmed its support for the programme of work of the Standing Advisory Committee adopted at the organizational meeting of the Committee, held in Yaoundé in July 1992 (see A/47/511).

2. By the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1197 (1998), to provide the States members of the Committee with the necessary support for the implementation and smooth functioning of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), created in 1999 by the heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the early warning mechanism in Central Africa. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the States members of the Committee with assistance to ensure that they are able to carry out their efforts and further requested him to submit to it at its fifty-ninth session a report on the implementation of the resolution.

3. The present report is submitted in compliance with that request. It covers the activities undertaken by the United Nations and the Committee since the submission of the previous report (A/58/177).

II. Action by the United Nations

4. During the reporting period, the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which serves as the secretariat of the Committee, assisted the Committee with the organization of its 20th and 21st ministerial meetings. It also continued to provide advisory, substantive and technical support to the Bureau of the Committee and to collaborate with the secretariat of ECCAS on matters relevant to the Committee's work, in particular, on questions related to peace and security.

5. Through its Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, the Department for Disarmament Affairs organized a training workshop for senior military and security officials on small arms and light weapons control in Central Africa. The workshop, which was organized in cooperation with the Government of Cameroon, the Institute for International Relations of Cameroon and the secretariat of the Economic Community of Central African States, was held in Yaoundé from 8 to 12 September 2003. It was financed from a voluntary contribution of the Government of Japan.

6. The primary objective of the workshop was to develop a common training approach in the Central African subregion with a view to enabling the States members of the Economic Community of Central African States to fight the proliferation of and illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons. It was also aimed at enhancing the capacity of a group of trainers by introducing them to techniques of effective control of small arms and light weapons.

7. In addition to the activities undertaken by the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, which was created at the behest of the Committee, continued to provide technical assistance to the States members of the Committee and to the secretariat of the Economic Community of Central African States. Consultations are under way between the Department of Political Affairs and the secretariat of the Economic Community of Central African States to determine how the Department of Political Affairs could best assist the secretariat of the Economic Community of Central African States with rendering its early warning mechanism operational.

III. Meetings of the Standing Advisory Committee

8. As stated above, during the period under review, the Committee organized its 20th and 21st ministerial meetings, which were held in Malabo, respectively, from 27 to 31 October 2003 and 21 to 25 June 2004 (see A/58/560 and A/59/154). Owing to financial constraints, the Committee was not able to organize the workshop on capacity-building for the Central African civil society and the seminar on women, peace, security and development in Central Africa, as provided for in its programme of work for the period 2003-2004.

IV. Programme of activities for the period 2004-2005

9. The Committee's programme of activities for the period 2004-2005 will be elaborated at its 22nd ministerial meeting, to be held in Brazzaville in January/February 2005.

V. Administrative and financial matters

10. During the period under review, the General Assembly continued to provide funding, from the regular budget, for two ministerial meetings, while the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights continued to finance the activities of the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa. No voluntary contributions were made to the Trust Fund of the Committee, from which its extrabudgetary activities are funded, and, as indicated above, that state of affairs resulted in its failure to organize the above-mentioned workshop and seminar. Efforts are still under way to raise the necessary funding for those two events, whose total costs are now estimated at US$ 290,000. In addition, the Committee hopes to raise enough funds to organize the workshop on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the standardized instrument for reporting military expenditures, which was scheduled to be held in Yaoundé in June 2003 at an estimated cost of $109,270.

11. The Secretary-General reiterates his appeal to Member States, intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organizations to contribute to the Trust Fund in order to enable the Committee to implement its 2004-2005 programme of work fully.

VI. Conclusions and observations

12. **The Committee remains the only forum for the States members of ECCAS to meet on a regular basis to examine developments in the areas of peace, security and development in their respective countries and the region as a whole. Its member States attach great value and importance to its continued existence. Although the Protocol establishing COPAX has since entered into force, the Council has yet to meet to review developments in the subregion and to develop an agenda for peace and sustainable development for the region.**

13. **The Central African region is also facing new security challenges, which require the collective, comprehensive and robust involvement of the Central African States themselves. In order for this to happen, it is imperative for COPAX, along with its subsidiary bodies, in particular, the early warning mechanism, to be rendered operational. This, in turn, requires the continued political will and commitment of all the States members of ECCAS as well as international cooperation and support. The United Nations remains determined to assist the subregion in its efforts to promote confidence- and security-building measures.**